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SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
LIGHTEVENING 107,483
SUNDAY 126,136

27 1961

Taking the Blame

PRESIDENT KENNEDY has shown a courageous understanding of the obligations of his office in accepting full responsibility for the Cuban debacle.

His position is similar to the responsibility that President Eisenhower accepted for the U-2 affair.

In both cases there may have been miscalculations and errors of judgment at levels lower than the presidency. Yet inevitably the final responsibility had to rest at the top, as Mr. Eisenhower and Mr. Kennedy recognized and asserted.

It is to be profoundly hoped the tragedy of the Cuban invasion will not lead to partisan knifework in Washington.

In this connection we have read the full statement on a TV panel by Secretary of the Interior Udall, which some Republicans think was an attempt to blame the Eisenhower administration for the Cuban failure.

It does not seem to us that this was Mr. Udall's intent. But that interpretation could be

read into it, and to that extent it was unfortunate.

The fact of the matter is that while the Eisenhower administration may have swung around to a policy of helping anti-Castro forces, this was not a policy binding on the Kennedy administration.

Mr. Kennedy did not have to follow it. He chose to follow it, and he is quite right in accepting the responsibility.

A study such as is now going on under direction of Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor into the government's "para-military" operations and the central intelligence agency may be helpful in determining where we made mistakes and how not to make them again.

But this is far different from charging around looking for scapegoats and whipping boys.

Our main purpose, as William Randolph Hearst jr. remarked in last Sunday's "Editor's Report," should be to learn our lessons and go on from there. Castro's Communist Cuba is far too grave a threat to permit petty partisan bickering.